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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 25th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. PIRIZ-BALLON (Uruguay)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 87: SPECIAL ECONOMIC AND DISASTER RELIEF ASSISTANCE (A/47/344, A/47/440-S/24558)

(a) OFFICE OF THE UNITED NATIONS DISASTER RELIEF COORDINATOR (A/47/288-E/1992/94)

(b) SPECIAL PROGRAMMES OF ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE (A/47/187, A/47/291-E/1992/95, A/47/337, A/47/420-S/24519, A/47/455, A/47/528, A/47/539, A/47/553, A/47/554, A/47/562, A/47/573)

AGENDA ITEM 88: INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE FOR THE ECONOMIC REHABILITATION OF ANGOLA (A/47/531)

1. Mr. ELIASSON (Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs) introduced the report of the Secretary-General on the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Coordinator (UNDRO), contained in document A/47/288. Although UNDRO had been absorbed into the newly established Department of Humanitarian Affairs, its activities would remain based in Geneva. It was to be hoped that the closer integration of all aspects of response to disasters, both man-made and natural, would enhance the effectiveness of the Office's work. The secretariat of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction would continue as a separate entity within the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, and would work closely with the Disaster Mitigation Branch of UNDRO. He voiced concern that more than 40 per cent of UNDRO staffing and associated costs needed to be met by voluntary contributions and expressed appreciation for the extrabudgetary support Member States had provided. He hoped that those items could ultimately be funded from the regular budget.

2. Introducing the report of the Secretary-General on assistance for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Liberia (A/47/528), he drew attention also to an informal status report available to Committee members which provided further details on the emergency humanitarian activities in progress and identified new resource requirements. It had been decided not to issue a second appeal in mid-1992 for the emergency relief programme in Liberia in the hope that the political situation would improve. However, there had been a recent escalation of fighting. He welcomed the call by the Economic Community of West African States on 20 October for an immediate cease-fire and the full implementation of the Yamoussoukro IV accord. In the meantime, the humanitarian needs of the population in Liberia and of Liberian refugees in neighbouring countries would require full funding of the previous appeal as well as the supplementary resource requirements identified in the Secretary-General's report. The Department of Humanitarian Affairs would continue to monitor the situation in Liberia closely and hoped to present a revised programme reflecting a transition from emergency assistance to rehabilitation, reconstruction and development in the near future.

(Mr. Eliasson)

3. Introducing the report of the Secretary-General on international assistance for the economic rehabilitation of Angola (A/47/531), he said that that country, like Liberia, seemed poised on the verge of a political reconciliation which would permit the reorientation of the emergency humanitarian assistance programmes. While United Nations efforts had continued to focus on the humanitarian needs of the population, the second phase of the Special Relief Programme for Angola also included rehabilitation components. Angola had been included in the consolidated United Nations/Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC) appeal for the drought emergency in southern Africa, the response to which had been disappointing. It was the non-food aid components of both the Special Relief Programme and the joint appeal which were most seriously underfunded. His Department had recently initiated consultations with a view to ensuring that Angola's urgent humanitarian requirements were met; failure to address those needs might undermine the process of political reconciliation, and he therefore urged a full and timely response.

4. The Secretary-General's report on assistance to Mozambique (A/47/539) pointed out that efforts in that country had been aimed at alleviating the combined impact of natural disasters and civil conflict. The recent, if fragile, prospects for a solution to the political conflict did not diminish the need for sustained efforts to respond to the urgent humanitarian needs of the people of Mozambique; in fact, the United Nations had been called upon to expand its relief programmes to cover all parts of the country. The signing of the recent General Peace Agreement for Mozambique brought to the fore the problems of demobilizing troops and the repatriation of over 1.5 million refugees from neighbouring countries. A committee for humanitarian assistance had been established at Maputo under the chairmanship of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Emergency Relief Operations; it had formulated a unified plan for the delivery of humanitarian relief throughout the country which had been submitted to both the Government and the Resistência Nacional Moçambicana (RENAMO). While the Government had accepted the proposal, RENAMO had not yet responded.

5. Immediate action by the international community was needed if a tragedy in Mozambique was to be averted: as a result of drought and civil strife, millions of Mozambicans faced starvation. Moreover, failure to act promptly could endanger the still fragile process of political reconciliation. He therefore urged full funding of the needs identified in the 1992-1993 emergency programme for Mozambique and the United Nations/SADCC appeal for the drought emergency in southern Africa. His Department would continue to monitor the situation carefully.

6. Turning to he report of the Secretary-General on emergency assistance for humanitarian relief and the economic and social rehabilitation of Somalia (A/47/553), he said that there were no words to describe the tragic situation of that country. His recent visit to Somalia had convinced him of the great need for urgent action and a clear distribution of responsibility.

(Mr. Eliasson)

Representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), non-governmental organizations and the United Nations were working very hard under extremely difficult conditions. One result of his mission had been the recently endorsed 100-Day Action Programme for Accelerated Humanitarian Assistance. Steps were being taken to strengthen coordination in the field through the office of the Coordinator for Humanitarian Assistance under the overall authority of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General. He welcomed the appointment of the president of CARE (USA) as operational manager for the programme; cooperation between non-governmental organizations and United Nations agencies was crucial to the success of the work in Somalia. He expressed appreciation also to the World Bank for a grant of $20 million to the people of Somalia, to be distributed by the World Food Programme (WFP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organization (WHO).

7. He hoped that the deployment of United Nations military forces would improve the security situation, which was impeding the implementation of effective humanitarian assistance in Somalia. The 100-Day Action Programme would be an important test of the international community's ability to provide humanitarian aid in situations of extreme political fragility.

8. Operation Lifeline Sudan, the subject of another report by the Secretary-General (A/47/554), had represented a significant breakthrough in United Nations humanitarian activities because it had sought to deliver humanitarian assistance to all in need, even in situations of civil conflict. Difficulties facing the operation included access, transportation, a lack of security and problematic relations with non-governmental organizations, yet many of those in desperate need had been reached. During his recent visit to the area, the Government of the Sudan and the various factions of the Sudanese People's Liberation Army had reaffirmed their support of the operation's basic principles. Agreement had been reached on the opening of 21 new airlift destinations and improved conditions for non-governmental organizations. Follow-up and assessment missions would be sent to parts of the Sudan not previously reached.

9. Towards the end of August 1992, two UNICEF staff members had been killed while on mission in southern Sudan. The Secretary-General had indicated that the Sudanese People's Liberation Army should be held accountable for those deaths. Assurances had been received from all parties of their commitment to protect humanitarian relief workers, and security procedures were being renewed to ensure that all possible protective measures were in force.

10. There had been persistent shortfalls in the funding of non-food aid components of emergency humanitarian assistance by the international community. The delay between commitment and delivery had often precluded the efficient management of relief supplies. Because emergency situations were by their very nature unpredictable, he appealed to the donor community to permit greater flexibility in the use of its contributions. The United Nations was

(Mr. Eliasson)

increasingly being called upon to provide humanitarian assistance in situations of political uncertainty and physical insecurity. Consequently, it was important to reach agreement on programmes and to ensure that such programmes effectively attacked the root causes of the problems. It was also important to provide reasonable protection for relief personnel and supplies. The international community could not permit the continuation of gross, cowardly and self-defeating violations of international humanitarian law. A balance must be struck between solidarity with those in need and concern for the safety of relief personnel.

11. Effective responses to emergency situations were necessarily collective. Non-governmental organizations such as ICRC and the International Organization for Migration were full partners and must be involved in the formulation and implementation of assistance programmes. Regional organizations also had a vital role to play, especially in dealing with issues of political reconciliation. It was the task of national authorities to provide guidance and support for those activities; the Department of Humanitarian Affairs sought to bring all the actors together in a coherent and coordinated effort to ensure a life of dignity for all.

12. Mr. OMAYAD (Director and Officer-in-Charge, Department of Political Affairs), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on assistance for the reconstruction and development of Lebanon (A/47/291-E/1992/95), recalled that the United Nations had consistently provided significant emergency and humanitarian relief assistance to Lebanon throughout the period of civil strife. The subsequent consolidation of authority by the Lebanese Government and other encouraging developments had made it possible for the Organization to focus on the need for rehabilitation, reconstruction and development. The programme of United Nations Assistance for the Reconstruction and Development of Lebanon was now fully operational. A resident coordinator had been present in Beirut since January 1992, and other United Nations programmes and specialized agencies had re-established or upgraded their presence in Lebanon. The United Nations system, including the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), had extended full cooperation and support to the resident coordinator, and a strong and integrated United Nations programme was being developed, with priority given to resettlement of the displaced, drug control, institutional capacity-building and humanitarian assistance. Coordination at the field level was complemented by coordination at the central level by the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs. Meetings with the representatives of all United Nations programmes and agencies with activities in Lebanon were held regularly in New York.

13. Lebanon was in urgent need of large-scale assistance from the international community to rebuild its infrastructure and economy after 17 years of violent conflict. However, the role of the United Nations was largely catalytic, and could not be effective without strong support from the donor community. Progress had clearly been made during the past year. However, the political uncertainty of recent months had adversely affected the

(Mr. Omayad)

economic situation, which in turn had affected living conditions. The new Lebanese Government's Council for Development and Reconstruction still planned to launch an emergency rehabilitation programme in 1993, in which the United Nations would be actively involved. He hoped that the World Bank would be in a position to convene a consultative group meeting in 1993. Naturally, peace and stability in the region would promote national security, which was essential for an economic and social environment conducive to reconstruction and development.

14. Mr. LOUP (Coordinator of Assistance to the Least Developed Countries, United Nations Development Programme), drew attention to document A/47/337, containing summary reports on special programmes of economic assistance to Benin, the Central African Republic, Chad, Djibouti, Ecuador, Madagascar, Vanuatu and Yemen. Seven of those countries had been included in the list of least developed countries established by the General Assembly. The reports focused on 1991 and approximately the first half of 1992 and thus closely reflected the countries' current priority social and economic needs and the ways in which the international community was responding to those needs.

15. At the round-table conferences of donors convened between 1990 and 1992 and at follow-up sectoral meetings, the Governments concerned had entered into a dialogue with donor agencies and institutions concerning their social and economic priorities and could now proceed to implement plans and programmes in the light of indications of future financing from domestic and donor sources. The report described the progress of the round-table process as it concerned Benin, the Central African Republic, Chad and the Republic of Yemen.

16. Several of the countries were carrying out structural adjustment programmes, and donor assistance was needed to implement the required adjustments and alleviate the social hardships of groups most adversely affected by them. While the international community had responded to the pressing needs of the countries concerned, its strong and sustained support would continue to be vital if those countries were to overcome their current difficulties and achieve their goals for economic and social advancement.

17. Mr. ZAMAN (Pakistan), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77, said that the question of special economic and disaster relief assistance was of the utmost importance. A number of long-standing humanitarian crises persisted and many new emergency situations had emerged, some of which were a direct result of transformations on the global political scene. The situation in many parts of Africa and several least developed countries was particularly alarming. He drew attention in that connection to the plight of the people of Somalia and the countries of the Horn of Africa.

18. It was increasingly evident that the humanitarian needs of affected countries concerned the entire international community. The United Nations had a crucial and growing role to play in providing humanitarian, special economic and disaster relief assistance through its operational agencies and

(Mr. Zaman, Pakistan)

as a catalyst for the efforts of Governments and regional and non-governmental organizations. In discharging its challenging responsibilities, the Department of Humanitarian Affairs must be guided by the principles set out in the annex to General Assembly resolution 46/182.

19. Furthermore, emergency assistance should be provided in a manner supportive of recovery and long-term development, which were essential to strengthen the ability of the developing countries to cope with natural disasters and other emergencies. The inadequacy of resources to deal with emergencies had been a major constraint on the effective response of the United Nations in the past, and the Organization should therefore be provided with additional voluntary resources for that purpose. The Group of 77 was pleased that the consolidated appeal mechanism had proved effective.

20. Ms. FREUDENSCHUSS-REICHL (Austria) said that the reports before the Committee demonstrated with overwhelming intensity how intimately peace and development were related. The use of food and other emergency relief supplies to pursue military, ideological or religious goals was totally unacceptable. The situation in southern Sudan, for example, was a matter of grave concern. In response to the consolidated appeal for Somalia, her Government had decided to allocate 10 million Austrian schillings to WFP and 2 million Austrian schillings to ICRC.

21. She proposed that the Committee should draft a single omnibus resolution on all the countries covered by special programmes of economic assistance, rather than separate resolutions on each one. The Committee's work would gain in efficiency, and a single, comprehensive resolution would be just as effective in terms of mobilizing support. General Assembly resolutions 43/211 and 46/108 were precedents for such an approach.

22. Mr. HADDAD (World Bank) said that, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 46/182, the World Bank had established excellent working relations with the Department of Humanitarian Affairs. The Bank and the Department shared the view that emergency assistance should be supportive of recovery and long-term development, that the disaster prevention and mitigation capacity of developing countries should be strengthened and that contributions to humanitarian assistance should not be made at the expense of resources for international development cooperation.

23. The Bank's experience in the case of the drought in southern Africa had demonstrated the potential for mitigating the worst consequences of drought when cooperation was established early between contributors and recipient Governments within the context of the adjustment process. As a result of a consolidated appeal launched earlier in the year, adjustment financing requirements had been expanded to include necessary food and recovery imports for Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia and Zimbabwe, and commitments of $310 million had been made.

(Mr. Haddad, World Bank)

24. The Bank had recently approved a grant of $20 million in support of the 100-Day Action Programme for Accelerated Humanitarian Assistance to Somalia which would be used to purchase emergency food and medical supplies for the people in famine-stricken areas of the country and Somali refugees who had fled to Djibouti, Ethopia and Kenya. An exception had been made in the case of Somalia to the Bank's customary procedure of authorizing loans guaranteed by recipient Governments.

25. Mr. WATSON (United States of America) recalled the remarks which President Bush had made to the General Assembly on the question of humanitarian assistance in September 1992. Many of the crises to which the international community was called upon to respond were man-made. The growing disaster in the Sudan, where both the Government and rebel leaders had shown astonishing indifference to the welfare of civilians in the southern part of the country, was a vivid example. The Government had adopted its own form of ethnic cleansing, and his delegation was outraged by the summary execution of local employees of relief organizations. The international community must not stand by in face of such reprehensible acts.

26. His delegation called upon the Government of the Sudan and the other parties to the conflict to respond to the growing humanitarian crisis and facilitate the efforts of the United Nations, other donors and private and voluntary organizations to assist those Sudanese in need of humanitarian relief. They must respect international humanitarian law, including provisions prohibiting summary punishment, as set forth in the Geneva Conventions of 1949, and give a full accounting of the summary execution of relief personnel. Arbitrary relocations must cease and international relief organizations must be given access to those in need of assistance. Surplus grain and meat that was to be exported should be offered to relief organizations for distribution within the country. Finally, he called upon all parties to honour the recent agreement concluded with the Department of Humanitarian Affairs to expand humanitarian relief efforts in the country and approve relief corridors in the south. If the parties to the conflict did not heed the warnings of the international community, tragedy would befall the Sudanese people.

27. His delegation had no illusions about the magnitude of the effort that would be required to resolve the security and logistical obstacles to the delivery of food, medicine and relief supplies needed to stop the dying in Somalia. His own country fully supported the commendable humanitarian efforts under way there: the United Nations 100-Day Action Programme for Accelerated Humanitarian Assistance merited strong support. The United States had provided $190 million in assistance to Somalia since the beginning of 1991. It continued to operate an emergency aid supply airlift and had mounted a major effort to provide food through commercial channels. Rehabilitation assistance was also critical, particularly in areas where local leaders were willing to resolve disputes peacefully. Security must also be bolstered as a matter of urgency so that food supplies would be delivered.

(Mr. Watson, United States)

28. In Mozambique, the effects of the drought had been magnified by armed conflict, and the delivery of humanitarian relief had been obstructed by security problems. Although more assistance would be required, donors had already responded generously to Mozambique's needs. His own country had provided $165 million during the past year. With the recent signing of the General Peace Agreement, there were signs that the countryside was being opened up to relief shipments. His delegation urged the Government of Mozambique and RENAMO to intensify their cooperation with United Nations agencies and the donor community to ensure that relief reached the neediest areas as soon as possible.

29. The resumption of hostilities in Liberia intensified the need for emergency assistance to victims of the civil war. His country had donated more than $200 million and urged other donors to contribute to the United Nations appeal as soon as possible.

30. Special attention must also be paid to Angola. His country, along with others, had provided substantial assistance to help Angola begin its long recovery from years of internal conflict. However, the continuing process of national reconciliation would require additional support for the run-off election, the completion of troop demobilization, the repatriation and resettlement of refugees and the internally displaced and the reintegration of demobilized troops.

31. There were many other countries which desperately needed emergency humanitarian relief. His country remained ready to support all peoples who wished to build strong economies and participates in a community of nations dedicated to world peace and prosperity.

32. Mr. WANG Xinggen (China) said that the figures provided in the Secretary-General's report on UNDRO (A/47/288) attested to the enhancement of the Office's capacity to mobilize the international community in providing assistance to disaster-stricken areas. His delegation appreciated the active role played by UNDRO in that effort.

33. As disaster prevention and mitigation were crucial to developing countries, which had weak infrastructures and limited prevention and preparedness capabilities, a major task was the establishment and improvement of early warning systems covering natural disasters and the application of existing advanced technologies in disaster relief and mitigation projects. All countries should have access to information relating to disaster prevention and mitigation and to applications of new technology. The relevant United Nations bodies should promote exchanges of information and the dissemination and application of new technology.

34. While commending those countries that had seen to the timely replenishment of stocks at the UNDRO warehouse at Pisa, he pointed out that since disasters differed in nature and the victims had different needs for

(Mr. Wang Xinggen, China)

relief materials, considerable attention should be devoted to the categories and quantities of items stocked with a view to preventing waste or loss of materials and higher storage costs.

35. His delegation supported the international community's efforts to provide assistance to Angola, which had done much to bring about its own economic rehabilitation. Regrettably, the external assistance provided fell far short of Angola's needs; he therefore appealed to all countries in a position to do so to assist Angola. China believed that the implementation of the Peace Accords by all parties to the conflict in Angola would contribute to the country's rehabilitation and reconstruction.

36. Although China was a developing country and a disaster-prone one, it had none the less provided relief assistance to other developing countries such as Angola, the Sudan, Somalia and Mozambique. He expressed the hope that countries with the ability and technology to do so would help the developing countries enhance their disaster prevention and mitigation capabilities so that they could increasingly rely on their own efforts in combating natural disasters, thereby minimizing the losses resulting from such disasters.

37. Mr. PREDA (Romania) said that the report of the Secretary-General on the work of UNDRO (A/47/288) reflected an impressive degree of international solidarity. His delegation had noted with satisfaction the increase not only in public awareness but also in responsiveness. The fact that the role of UNDRO in providing fast relief and in channelling international aid had grown continuously proved its capacity to manage complex situations.

38. The range of disasters demanding an international response was growing increasingly complex, ranging from natural phenomena such as volcanic eruptions and earthquakes to man-made disasters such as population movements and civil unrest. Accordingly, new strategies, a strengthening of the coordination role of UNDRO and a new emphasis on the cost-effectiveness of relief operations were required. His delegation welcomed the close and efficient coordination which existed among UNDRO, the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, other United Nations agencies and governmental and non-governmental organizations.

39. Romania appreciated the efforts of UNDRO to improve preparedness activities and to provide a better response to disasters, such as the search and rescue projects, improvement of communications and the Disaster Management Training Programme. The efforts made in the context of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction were well focused.

40. Mr. MARUYAMA (Japan) said that his delegation highly valued the work of UNDRO and the dedication it had consistently demonstrated in addressing increasingly diverse and complex disasters and emergencies in recent years. Against that background, his Government had strengthened its financial support for various UNDRO programmes; for example, it had contributed $140 million for

(Mr. Maruyama, Japan)

disbursement to international relief agencies engaged in assisting refugees and displaced persons who had been forced to flee Iraq and Kuwait during the Gulf crisis.

41. The disaster information service provided by UNDRO had greatly contributed to ensuring a swift and appropriate response to requests for relief assistance and therefore deserved the Committee's appreciation. His delegation strongly hoped that under the Department for Humanitarian Affairs, the natural disaster management functions, especially those in the field of information services formerly carried out by UNDRO, would not only continue to receive due attention but would in fact be strengthened. The Government of Japan, for its part, had launched a number of relief activities in 1992, including the dispatch of several relief teams to countries that had suffered natural disasters and the delivery of emergency relief supplies worth $1.2 million to countries such as Turkey, Papua New Guinea and Nicaragua.

42. The Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs was to be commended for taking the initiative, in collaboration with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia, in organizing the coordination meeting on humanitarian assistance for Somalia and for underscoring the gravity of the problems in that country as well as for coordinating humanitarian activities by donor Governments, international organizations and non-governmental organizations. The 100-Day Action Programme for Accelerated Humanitarian Assistance to Somalia, which had been reviewed at the coordination meeting, laid the foundation for more consolidated and expanded assistance to that country.

43. The situation in Somalia was an enormous tragedy requiring a commensurate response by the international community. Japan, like other countries, had been seriously concerned about conditions in Somalia and had actively participated in the discussions leading to the adoption of resolutions on the situation by the Security Council. His Government had extended a total of $5 million to the United Nations peace-keeping operation in Somalia and strongly hoped that the early deployment of additional peace-keeping forces throughout the country would lead to the re-establishment of minimum security conditions that would permit the delivery of humanitarian supplies. He strongly appealed to all Somali parties concerned to exercise maximum restraint and to enter into talks aimed at national reconciliation.

44. His Government especially appreciated the field activities undertaken by international and non-governmental organizations and had contributed over $10 million to those organizations for the provision of food, medicine and other relief materials to the Somali people in Somalia and in neighbouring countries. After paying a tribute to the Governments that had been actively involved in airlift operations, he said that Japan was currently in the process of determining its contribution to that effort and was considering additional assistance based upon the 100-Day Action Programme.

(Mr. Maruyama, Japan)

45. His Government was also deeply concerned over the situation in the Sudan and found the reports of human rights violations by government authorities and the armed forces there to be profoundly disturbing. Japan believed that such a situation must not be tolerated and had taken a number of concrete measures, including the suspension, except for purely humanitarian and emergency relief, of all official development assistance to the Sudan until it was assured that such human rights violations had ceased. Japan had also encouraged the Sudanese Government to take steps to improve its deteriorating relations with the international community.

46. His Government welcomed the encouraging developments in Mozambique and supported the General Peace Agreement, which provided a solid foundation for the implementation, on a greatly expanded scale, of humanitarian assistance by the international community. With respect to recent reports of cease-fire violations, his Government joined other members of the international community in appealing to the parties concerned to exercise maximum restraint. His Government had extended $3.4 million in emergency humanitarian assistance to help alleviate the suffering of the people of Mozambique and had contributed $4.1 million through WFP for the Mozambican people in Mozambique as well as those protected as refugees in Malawi and Zimbabwe.

AGENDA ITEM 78: DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION (continued)

Draft resolution on the net transfer of resources between developing countries and developed countries (A/C.2/47/L.10)

47. Mr. ZAMAN (Pakistan), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and the People's Republic of China, introduced the draft resolution and expressed the sponsors' hope that it would receive the unanimous approval of the Committee.

Draft resolution on the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) (A/C.2/47/L.12)

48. Mr. ZAMAN (Pakistan), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and the People's Republic of China, introduced the draft resolution, which he hoped would be unanimously endorsed by the Committee.

Draft resolution on assistance to Yemen (A/C.2/47/L.11)

49. Mr. AHMIA (Algeria) introduced the draft resolution and expressed the hope that the Committee would reach a consensus on it.

The meeting rose at 12.20 p.m.